K.P.

Dean, P.J.

MEMORANDUM

March 21, 1964

Int

TO: Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel

FROM: Burt W. Griffin

RE: Off the Record Conversation with P. T. Dean

The tone of my conversation with Sgt. Dean was entirely opposite to that which he apparently represented to District Attorney Wade. At the outset I told him that in the two or three hours that he and I had been talking I had found him a likeable and personable individual, and that I believed that he was a capable and honest police officer. I tried to approach him on a basis of respect and friendship while maintaining a certain distance. I said, however, that I did not believe his testimony in some respects but that I thought I understood why it was that he was not making the truthful statement which I believed possible. I then stressed that this investigation by the President's Commission was of extreme importance to the National Security and that I felt that, if there was some way that he could be induced to come forward with a more forthright statement without doing injury to himself, the Commission would probably be willing to explore a means to afford him the protection he deemed necessary. I had in mind protection from disclosure of his identity to his superior officers and the public although I did not say so to him. I pointed out to him that if he had any such inclination to change his story it would probably be best that he not approach us directly but that he secure an attorney so that the problems that he felt he faced could be worked out without committing him to anything on record.

It is my recollection that, after stating this, he said he didn't understand what I had in mind since he had tried to be extremely truthful. I believe he then asked me to explain what I had in mind. I told him the two particular points in his testimony that I believed to be untrustworthy: that Ruby told him on November 24 that he had entered the basement through the Main Street Ramp and that he thought of killing Oswald on the night of November 22.

My recollection of the order of our conversation thereafter is not entirely clear, but the following is accurate as to substance. I told him that I was not really concerned personally about the statement that he made in his letter of February 18, to the effect that Ruby told him that he had thought about killing Oswald on Friday night since, from the standpoint of the Commission, it was probably an encouragement to getting the truth that Ruby had been convicted and given the death penalty.

(It should be noted that my true feeling was that his statement concerning Ruby's premeditation was the more reprehensible, if false; however, I thought I could not earn his confidence by dwelling on that statement.) I said what I was particularly concerned with was that Ruby told him how he got into the basement. I explained that, although he might not see the significance of that inquiry, he would have to accept my statement that from the evidence available to me it was extremely important to the national security to learn how Ruby entered the basement. He then asked me if everything that he said in his letter of February 18th was not confirmed by other sources and by the memorandum of Special Agent Sorrells on the subject. I said that I did not recall but that I had come to think that his story about the entry in the basement might not be true before I read Sorrells' report. I told him that I thought I understood how he came to write that report and tried to emphasize again that what we were most concerned with was getting the truth. He then asked me why Mr. Sorrells had told District Attorney Wade he couldn't take the stand at the Ruby trial and testify. I said that I didn't know anything about Mr. Sorrells' conversation with the local authorities about testimony. (I got the impression that Dean was present at this interview) Dean said Sorrells had refused to testify because he had not advised Ruby of his Constitutional rights before talking to him. I believe that it was some time after this that I again re-emphasized, in an appeal to his sense of patriotism, the importance of this investigation and my hope that he would come forward with a story which was more credible. In this connection, I remember stating to him that it would not be for me to resolve the question of credibility but would be for the Commission. I said I wanted him to understand that anything he told me would be kept within the confines of the Commission during the period of this investigation although eventually the material which we were collecting would probably be made available to the public.

After this lengthy conversation, Dean emphasized how much he was concerned with helping the Commission and informed me of a telephone call which he said he had taken while on duty at the Dallas Police Department at 2:00 A.M. Tuesday morning. Dean said the call was from a man in Vancouver, B. C., who claimed to have an undeveloped movie film of the Presidential assassination taken with a wide angle lens from the southwest corner of the plaza in front of the Texas School Book Depository. Dean produced notes with the name of the caller, the telephone number from which the call was placed, the names of the long distance and police department operators handling the call, and the name of the party from whose phone the call was placed. Dean said he believed the man was sincere. Dean said he advised the man to send the film to the President's Commission but the man insisted he would mail it to Dean. I then recalled the court reporter and explored this information on the record.

I then concluded the deposition, thanked Dean for his assistance, and immediately began to dictate a memorandum of our off the record

conversation. The time was about 11:30 P.M. Tuesday night. As I was dictating, Mr. Hubert entered the office. I interrupted the dictation to bring him up to date, and continued the memorandum in his presence. An unedited copy of that memorandum is attached hereto.

On Wednesday morning, prior to 9:00 A.M., Mr. Hubert and I consulted concerning the files Dean had indicated might be mailed to him. As a result of that conversation with Hubert, I called the Dallas FBI office and gave the FBI the names of the telephone operator in the Dallas Police Department and the people in Canada which Dean had tipped over to us and asked the FBI to interview these people.

Secret Service Agent Sorrells also came into the U. S. Attorney's office in Dallas on Wednesday morning and I mentioned to him what Dean had stated concerning an interview Sorrells allegedly had with Wade. I asked Sorrels to prepare a memorandum of that interview and he said that he would.

Some time later on Wednesday morning, March 25, I received a telephone call from Assistant Chief Batchelor of the Dallas Police Department. I was then in the private office being occupied by Mr. Hubert and myself, and I had present a court reporter and a witness whose name I do not immediately recall. Chief Batchelor asked me what kind of difficulty we had concerning Dean. I do not remember exactly what my response was to him although it was in the general nature of a statement that we had not had any serious difficulty. I also told him, however, that there were presently two people in my office and that perhaps we could discuss his interest in Dean at lunch. No definite luncheon date was set since I desired to consult with Mr. Hubert before carrying the matter further.

I was not able to consult with Hubert until late Wednesday and the following day, Thursday, Batchelor was out of town. When Mr. Hubert advised me at about 7:30 P.M. Thursday night that Mr. Rankin had called concerning the Wade letter, I felt it then became imperative that we contact Batchelor as soon as possible. I conferred with Mr. Hubert and Barefoot Sanders immediately upon arriving at the U. S. Attorney's office on Friday and both agreed that I should re-contact Batchelor and ascertain his interest in the Dean matter before reporting back to Washington. I placed two telephone calls to Chief Batchelor without reaching him and was finally called back by him at about 10:30 A.M. Friday morning. Batchelor talked first to Mr. Hubert about a scheduling problem and then, with Hubert in the room but not listening in on an extension or otherwise able to hear Batchelor's voice, I talked with Batchelor.

Chief Batchelor wanted to know if we had some reason to believe that Dean wasn't telling the truth. I said that we did. Batchelor then began to talk about Dean's statement that Ruby told Dean he had thought of killing Oswald Friday night. Batchelor indicated by his manner of speaking that this was his primary concern. I said that I had been principally concerned with the information about how Ruby got into the basement and that the statement about considering killing

Gould on Friday night was a secondary topic. (My reason for so doing was to avoid alarming him since he stated that he did not want the Ruby prosecution to be jeopardized.) Batchelor also stated that he had faith in Dean and that he felt that Dean would be willing to go on a polygraph if that were necessary. I told him I had not given any consideration to that and I thought that consideration of any such action would be premature since I wanted to have an opportunity to review all the material which we had before I drew any hard and fast conclusion. Batchelor asked me if we had any hard evidence that Dean was not telling the truth. I said I couldn't show him what evidence we had without permission from Washington but that I believed we did have substantial evidence on the question of entry into the basement. There then ensued some confusion as to which of the two statements Batchelor and I were talking about since we both tried to talk in extreme generalities. In the midst of this confusion, Batchelor said that Dean hadn't even mentioned the premeditation statement (some ambiguous word was used which I cannot recall) in his letter of February 18, 1964. I attempted to clarify this directly by mentioning the statement about premeditation. I got the impression that Batchelor was talking about the premeditation statement. I then responded that perhaps there might be some documents which we hadn't seen. (Immediately after the telephone conversation ended, Mr. Hubert and I checked our file and found that Dean had, as I was sure, mentioned the premeditation in the February 18th letter.)

From time to time throughout the conversation, Batchelor expressed concern about jeopardizing the prosecution of Ruby. I told him that I felt, even without Dean as a witness, that they had a good case against Ruby. But in any event, I added, I did not have authority to act; nor was the Commission going to make any statement to the press about our activities in Dallas or take any other action in a precipitous fashion or without careful consideration of the prosecutions problems. I did not give him any assurances but tried to talk in generalities which would convey the impression that we were reasonable people and that there was no need for concern. The entire conversation lasted between five and ten minutes.

Encl.

Griffin/jv/4-1-64
CC: Griffin chron file
Mr. Willens